# System Configuration Team Meeting Notes

NOAA Fisheries Offices, Portland, Oregon
December 16, 2004

***1. Greetings and Introductions.***

Today's meeting, held at the NOAA Fisheries offices in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by Bill Hevlin. Hevlin led a round of introductions and a review of today's agenda. He distributed copies of the minutes from the November SCT meeting, and asked that any comments be submitted directly to him. The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the items discussed and decisions made at this meeting. Anyone with questions about these notes should contact Hevlin at 503/230-5415.

***2. Portland and Walla Walla District FFDRWG Update.***

Mike Langslay said there have been a number of special FFDRWG meetings in the past month, covering The Dalles decision framework document, the multi-criteria decision model as it applies to The Dalles decision document, and the John Day decision framework document. Langslay noted that the Corps is very pleased with how the multi-criteria model is functioning; it does a very good job of incorporating risk and uncertainty.

Any change in direction as a result of those meetings? Ron Boyce asked. We're still working through the list of alternatives identified at the two-day meeting at The Dalles last year, Langslay replied. We're going to go ahead and move forward with a 90% document, to give people something to review – that will give you a good picture of what we've done, and why. The 90% report is expected to be available in February 2005. Is putting some sort of surface bypass system in the skeleton bays an alternative you're considering? Hevlin asked. Yes, Langslay replied. Is this an off-the-shelf model? Scott Bettin asked. Yes – we bought it on-line, Langslay replied – it's very transparent, and that's what we like about it.

With respect to future meetings, Langslay said that, once the exact due date for the 90% report is known, a special FFDRWG meeting will be scheduled to review and discuss it.

There was another important meeting on December 1, to discuss The Dalles research, Langslay said. We talked about the Bay 6 vortex problem, and a potential vortex suppression device – essentially, a stoplog, for now, but eventually, some sort of floating design. We're talking about a short period – perhaps 6 days – of balloon-tag testing in April to evaluate its effectiveness, as well as a brief spill test some time in January to look at the physical response to

the vortex suppression device. Also at that meeting, we discussed the forebay behavior work and the BGS. We decided to put off that effort for another year and concentrate on data analysis and design, in preparation for a 2006 or 2007 prototype test. That will involve some ERDC trips to look at physical modeling, Langslay said. The next regular FFDRWG meeting is scheduled for January 25; on January 24, there will be a John Day decision document meeting. I would also like to bring everyone together to talk about subyearling chinook tagging, probably some time in the last two weeks in January, Langslay said. There is also an SRWG meeting scheduled for this Monday at The Dalles. There will also be a special FFDRWG meeting on the Powerhouse 2 decision document some time in January, said Dennis Schwartz – we want to have some regional discussion on that document before we send it to SCT.

After a few minutes of additional discussion, Hevlin said he will place a discussion of the Bonneville 2 decision document on the agenda for the January 20 SCT meeting.

Marvin Shutters said there is nothing new to report at this time in terms of recent Walla Walla District FFDRWG activities; we're still talking about a potential agency trip to WES from February 7-11. Shutters asked anyone interested in joining this excursion to let him know as soon as possible. Most of the trip will focus on the Lower Monumental outfall divider wall, Lower Monumental RSW location and spill patterns, and the Ice Harbor RSW. There may also be some modeling work related to the potential summer spill test at Lower Granite. The fall chinook transport studies have also been getting a lot of our attention lately, Shutters added; John Skalski, Al Giorgi and Mike Schiewe are currently reviewing the one-pagers, and should complete their evaluation of them by January 6, with a meeting to discuss the results of our evaluation on January 13 in Walla Walla.

***3. Summary of the McNary Powerhouse and Fish Passage Planning Meeting on November 29.***

Tom Lorz said this meeting mainly focused on the gatewell test and barging strategies; both topics will be revisited at Monday's meeting at The Dalles.

***4. SRWG Update.***

This topic was covered during agenda item 2.

***5. Continued Discussion of FY'05 CRFM Program and Budget.***

John Kranda distributed the most recent version of the FY'05 CRFM program spreadsheet. With respect to the FY'05 budget, he said, we still don't know the final amount – by the January meeting, we'll know how much savings and slippage will be deducted from the $85 million appropriation. We're hoping savings and slippage will not hit us as hard in 2005 as it did in 2004, when 22.5% was deducted. There are some indications that savings and slippage may be somewhat less this year, he said.

You heard the discussion about The Dalles, Kranda continued; none of the costs have changed on The Dalles-related projects on the FY'05 spreadsheet (Line-items 12 and 33). One big number that could change to our benefit is high-flow PIT at Bonneville (line-item 13), Kranda said; however, we won't know for a little while yet. Depending on how much savings and slippage is deducted, it's looking as if it may be possible to fund all of the items on the current FY'05 list (total cost $74.6 million).

In terms of what has changed since the last time you saw this spreadsheet, said Kranda, Line-item 5 has increased from 0 to $80,000, to finish the recon-level study and report (by this spring). The report will then need to go back to Congress before the decision is made as to how to proceed, Kranda said. Line-item 41 (estuary studies) has increased by $200,000, to $6.55 million. Line-item 64, McNary adult lamprey passage, was added following the November SCT meeting, at a cost of $350,000. With respect to Line-item 63, The Dalles J-block system removal, there may be a need to accomplish some of that work soon, due to concerns about potential hydraulic fluid leakage. The SCT agreed that whatever work is deemed necessary by the Corps should proceed as soon as possible.

Where are we on the question of Little Goose vs. McNary, in terms of the next priority for RSW installation? Boyce asked. Based on the discussions we've been having recently, the Corps suggested, and put into its proposed actions, that it may be more appropriate to prioritize Columbia River activities ahead of Lower Snake activities, Kranda replied. Part of that logic was that we felt we could build one RSW per year; if we're going to do Lower Monumental by 2007, one thought was that we could do Little Goose in 2008, followed by McNary 1 in 2009 and McNary 2 in 2010. Wouldn't it be possible to construct two RSWs in one year? Boyce asked. That doesn't appear feasible, said Kranda; that's why we were thinking of doing McNary 1 in 2008, McNary 2 in 2009, and Little Goose in 2010.

Boyce said there has been considerable discussion among the salmon managers about the feasibility of getting the Little Goose RSW in place sooner, rather than later, given the number of in-river fish that will be coming down from Lower Granite. There is no doubt that McNary is also a high priority, he said, but I wanted to get Little Goose back on the table. Dana Knutsen noted that juvenile survival through Little Goose is already very high; it might actually decrease if we install an RSW there. We don't really have enough data for Little Goose to say how much of a problem we have there, but are going to start collecting data this year. In the meantime, we know we have a problem at McNary, he said. And I think we should collect that Little Goose data this year, said Boyce, but in the meantime, we should continue to keep the option of a 2008 installation at Little Goose open.

Still, given the fact that a McNary RSW would benefit both Snake River and Mid- and Upper Columbia River fish, that we have an acknowledged survival problem at McNary, that we want to focus on the worst performers first, and that we can't build more than one RSW per year, it makes sense to the Corps to look at McNary, said Kranda. Boyce noted that the salmon managers had agreed to accept the action agencies' decision as to whether Lower Monumental or Little Goose should be the next priority for RSW construction; we agreed to support doing

Lower Monumental in 2007, as long as the Little Goose RSW went in in 2008. If you focus on McNary instead of Little Goose, you'll be going back on that agreement, he said. Hevlin added that McNary is a much more complex project than Little Goose; at this point, we don't even know how many RSWs would be needed at McNary to provide adequate attraction flow. It may not even be possible to get an RSW installed at McNary by 2008, he said; in the meantime, Little Goose is a much more straightforward project, from an RSW standpoint. Also, said Boyce, if the Corps feels that we need more data from Little Goose in order to justify an RSW there, then we'd better put some funding back into that line-item so that we can buy tags to do a study in 2005.

The group devoted an extensive discussion to this topic; Russ Kiefer provided an overview of the most recent in-river survival data for the Snake River projects. he said that, in his opinion, no further survival studies are needed at Little Goose; what is needed is a study that identifies how fish approach the spillway at that project, to shed light on where, precisely, the Little Goose RSW should be located. Boyce said that he can't think of a single technological improvement developed in the last 25 years that offers greater biological benefits than RSW technology, in terms of fish condition, reduced delay, and reduced forebay predation. We're not suggesting that you delay things at McNary, said Hevlin – we're saying, work on the McNary and Little Goose RSWs simultaneously, at least in terms of design, plans and specs.

Ultimately, Hevlin said what the majority of the SCT is suggesting is that funding needs to be restored for the Little Goose RSW (line-item 3) in FY'05. We would like to see the Little Goose and McNary RSW modeling/design work proceed on parallel tracks, for now, he said. At the same time, Hevlin said, I recognize that we need to improve dam survival at McNary; the best way to do that is to increase passage via spill at that project, and reduce the percentage of migrants passing the project via the turbines and via bypass. We would also like to see a route-specific passage study at Little Goose, said Boyce. If we go down this dual-track road, Kranda observed, we're also going to have to talk about what's going to move down our list of FY'05 CRFM priorities.

The bottom line is that I don't want the Corps to slow down its work on McNary, said Boyce. However, it's very important for work to proceed at Little Goose as well.

Kiefer reiterated his disappointment that the Corps has made what was, in his view, a unilateral decision to de-fund the Little Goose RSW work in FY'05, contrary to the agreement that was so painstakingly reached about the relative priority of Lower Monumental vs. Little Goose. Hevlin observed that, in his view, this discussion has gone around and around for a number of SCT meetings now, and suggested that it may be time to elevate this issue to IT. The discussion also touched on Line-item 46, the McNary survival/efficiency study. In response to a question, Shutters said this will be a two-treatment test. In response to another question, Knutsen and Kranda said they will check again on the Corps' ability to accelerate the RSW design and construction schedule, including the possibility of doing more than one RSW per year. After a few minutes of further discussion, Kranda said he has heard the salmon managers' comments at today's meeting, and will investigate the questions and concerns they have raised.

***6. Bonneville 2 Corner Collector PIT-Tag Detection Development.***

Scott Bettin said there was a meeting on this topic yesterday, to talk about how to get the corner collector detector up and running – the question is, what year? Do we want to do a prototype, to minimize the risk, but lose a year, or proceed without a prototype, at a higher level of risk? Basically, said Sandy Downey, when this project began three years ago, we had to develop a transceiver, an antenna and a new tag – there were a number of technical problems that had to be solved. We have identified a transceiver design we want to move forward with; the next problem is antenna design, because the antennas we've tried so far haven't worked very well. Bettin distributed a rough schematic showing what Bonneville has in mind, conceptually, in terms of the antenna design. Basically, the region needs to decide whether they want to meet the 2006 deadline, or meet the 2006 deadline with higher risk, Downey said.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the technical and structural details of the corner collector detector design. Downey said the plan is to produce a test plan in time for the region to make a go/no go decision by June 1. If the region is satisfied with the proposed test and design, it should be possible to get the system up and running by 2006, although the Corps cautioned that this is by no means certain. What's the difference in cost between a prototype and a more permanent installation? asked Dave Wills. We don't have any solid cost estimates at this time, Bettin replied; the permanent detector would likely be more expensive, but the prototype would still be pretty costly.

Ultimately, it was agreed that the SCT would like to see the detector installed by 2006, if possible, while respecting the Corps' structural concerns. We will have a new schedule available prior to the meeting on this topic on January 13, said Schwartz. Bettin noted that this project is analogous to the space program; we've built Space Ship 1, but it didn't work as well as we had hoped. Now we want to go to the moon, and people are a little hesitant – we could succeed, and there could be problems. It's a complex problem, he said; one encouraging thing is that the antenna contractor, Digital Angel, is willing to move forward under a performance-based contract. That indicates to me that they're pretty confident, he said. Bettin added that the SCT will receive another update on this topic at its January 20 meeting.

***7. Next SCT Meeting Date.***

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for Thursday, January 20, probably in the afternoon. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle.